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TAGS: [IR](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: IRPO: LITTLE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HIZBALLAH IN IRAN

REF: DUBAI 0730

CLASSIFIED BY: Timothy M. Brys, Acting IRPO Chief, Dubai, UAE.
REASON: 1.4 (b)

1.(C/NF) Summary: Anecdotal evidence garnered from Iranian visa applicants and other ConGen Iranian contacts in Dubai in late-July and early-August indicate public support in Iran for Hizballah is very low. The Iranian government reportedly induced people to join public rallies in support of Hizballah in late-July. End summary.
Iranians "Disgusted" by Hizballah

2.(C/NF) The head of a management consulting firm in Tehran told Conoff on July 31 that the Iranian people were "disgusted" by Hizballah. She said the Iranian people did not support Hizballah against Israel and do not like war of any kind. A key Iranian defense attorney, who has defended the likes of Akbar Ganji and Abbas Abdi, echoed these sentiments during an August 26 discussion with Conoffs. He claimed that Iranians do not support Hizballah and have historic ties to Israel. He clarified that it was mainly the "intellectuals" and upper class Iranians who question the government's support for the group, while the "lower class" believe the government's propaganda regarding Hizballah and the necessity of supporting the group. He clarified, however, that Iranians in general neither condone nor want war.

3.(C/NF) A Tehran-based businessman told Acting CG on July 15 that people are becoming resentful that the government is funding Hizballah and Palestinian groups when Iranian people are "starving." According to a key Iranian AIDS doctor, the Iranian government has offered 15,000 dollars to every Lebanese whose home was destroyed during the recent conflict. He claims that 12,000 dollars of this money is for rent, while the other 3,000 is for furniture. The government has docked the pay of every government employee 30,000 tomans (approx. 30 dollars) to help fund this effort. The doctor, who works at a government hospital linked to Shahid Beheshti University, claims that although 60 percent of his colleagues at the hospital support Ahmadinejad, they question why they should have to give up their hard-earned money to support "Hizballah" when they are struggling to make ends meet. Iranians interviewed for a July 22 New York Times article echoed these sentiments. For example, Ali Reza Moradi, a 35-year old portrait artist with a small booth in downtown Tehran stated, "We Iranians have a saying. . . We should save our own house first and then save the mosque. A lot of people think this way. The government should help its people first, and then help people in Lebanon."

4.(C/NF) An ophthalmologist from Tehran told Conoff on July 29 that "things are getting really bad in Iran." She stated that support for Hizballah is very low. Iranians would rather see the money that is currently being used to support Hizballah help those in Iran who are in need.

Iranian Government Bribes People to Rally

5.(C/NF) A medical student from Tehran told Conoff that Iranians are not supportive of Hizballah. He reiterated the Tehran-based businessman's comments to the Acting CG and the New York Times article. In addition, he claimed on August 6 that the majority of participants in the rallies in support of Hizballah were actually members of the Iranian military in plainclothes who were bussed in for the rally. He alleged that the Iranian government also uses the promise of free food as an enticement for people to show up for rallies and protests. This tracks with information provided to Conoff during the protests in Tehran in February in response to cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed which appeared in several European newspapers (Reftel). At the time, an Iranian visa applicant who lives close to the British Embassy in Tehran told Conoff that she saw buses bring people - mainly young Iranian men - to the protests.

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